

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 282 279

EA 019 274

AUTHOR Leatt, Desmond J.
TITLE Inschool Suspension Programs for At-Risk Students.
INSTITUTION Oregon School Study Council, Eugene.
PUB DATE Mar 87
NOTE 35p.
AVAILABLE FROM Publication Sales, Oregon School Study Council,
University of Oregon, 1787 Agate Street, Eugene, OR
97403 (\$4.00 prepaid; quantity discounts; \$1.50 for
shipping and handling will be added on billed
orders).
PUB TYPE Collected Works - Serials (022) -- Reports -
Evaluative/Feasibility (142)
JOURNAL CIT OSSC Bulletin; v30 n7 Mar 1987
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Attendance; Behavior Problems; Consultation Programs;
*Cooperative Planning; Demonstration Programs;
Discipline Policy; Educational Quality; *High Risk
Students; Individualized Education Programs; *In
School Suspension; *Local Norms; Program Development;
*Program Effectiveness; Program Implementation;
School Responsibility; Secondary Education; *Student
Needs; Student School Relationship
IDENTIFIERS *Oregon

ABSTRACT

Research findings and examples of inschool suspension programs in Oregon are combined in this bulletin. An introduction defines "at-risk" students as those having behavioral or attendance problems. Unlike traditional out-of-school suspension, alternative programs attempt to keep at-risk students at school. Chapter 1 surveys three inschool suspension programs that consider each school's unique environment. One high school and junior high school coordinated program features a Saturday school and afterschool detentions. A middle school and high school have implemented a nationally validated project, the inschool Positive Alternatives to School Suspension (PASS), that focuses on preventive measures. Essential characteristics of inschool suspension programs that address needs of at-risk students are examined in chapter 2. Individualized course scheduling offers opportunities for achievement, and requirements for responsibility in problem-solving break the negative cycle in which at-risk students are caught. A clear understanding of expectations within a supportive environment makes return to regular classrooms more likely. Components of effective inschool suspension programs, including referral, student interviews, the role of counselors, and followup, are covered in chapter 3. These features are illustrated by the three programs described in chapter 1. Chapter 4 examines the conceptual framework used in implementing inschool programs. Because alternative programs must be developed from a school's needs, participation in planning should be broad-based. Copies of a disciplinary referral form and a list of in-school suspension rules, two pages of references, and a list of interviews are included. (CJH)

ED282279

Inschool Suspension Programs for At-Risk Students

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION
CENTER (ERIC)

☒ This document has been reproduced as
received from the person or organization
originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve
reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this docu-
ment do not necessarily represent official
DERI position or policy.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS
MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

P. Piele

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES
INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

Desmond J. Leatt

March 1987
Vol. 30, No. 7

EA 019 274

OSSC BULLETIN

2

OSSC BULLETIN

Inschool Suspension Programs for At-Risk Students

Desmond J. Leatt

March 1987
Vol. 30, No. 7

Oregon School Study Council

ISSN 0095-6694
Individual Copy \$4.00
Quantity Discounts:
10-24 copies - 15%
25-49 copies - 20%
50+ copies - 25%

Oregon School Study Council
1787 Agate Street
University of Oregon
Eugene, Oregon 97403
(503) 686-5045

The University of Oregon is an affirmative action, equal opportunity employer.

Preface

Concern for the welfare of students who are at risk of dropping out of school is motivating school administrators to take a fresh look at past and present practices of student suspensions. Suspending students who are already inclined to drop out of school may exacerbate rather than help to resolve these students' predicament.

Seeking to address this problem, educators have designed a variety of creative alternatives to out-of-school suspension. The philosophy of this approach is to enable students to have as little interruption to their regular school program as possible while affording school personnel the opportunity of helping these students develop adequate skills to survive and progress at school.

This Bulletin combines research and other published information with examples of several inschool suspension programs in school districts in Oregon. These programs, each designed for a particular environment, demonstrate that constructive alternatives can be devised to address this marginal group of students.

Desmond J. Leatt, an OSSC graduate research assistant, is enrolled in the Division of Educational Policy and Management at the University of Oregon.

Philip K. Piele
Executive Director

Contents

Preface	iii
Introduction	1
1. Survey of Three Inschool Suspension Programs	3
Cottage Grove High School and Lincoln Junior High School	4
Judson Middle School	5
Grant High School	6
2. Addressing the Needs of At-Risk Students	8
Academic Assistance	8
Developing a Sense of Responsibility	10
Flexible Assignments	10
Clear Expectations	11
Focus on the At-Risk Student	11
3. Components of Inschool Suspension Programs	13
The Referral Process	13
Student Interviews	15
Followup	15
The Role of Counselors	16
4. Implementation	17
Laying the Foundation	17
Steps in Planning an Alternative Program	18
Conclusion	21
Appendices	22
Appendix A	23
Appendix B	24
References	25
Interviews	27

Introduction

It's 8:00 a.m. and two eighth-grade boys are in my office for skipping their last three classes yesterday. As vice-principal, it is my job to discipline them. Both boys are already looking forward to what they think is going to happen—a day or two of out-of-school suspension. They are thinking about what a great time they can have. For openers, the fair is in town. The video arcade, of course, is always open. And what a chance to show their friends who's really getting punished! Phoning both sets of parents at work produces similar responses: "Go ahead and send him home, he has a key. I'll talk to him when I get home at six tonight."

The above situation, reported by Rolland James (1983) is all too common. Similar stories are reported by other administrators whose schools do not have alternatives to out-of-school suspension. To most people, punishing students who skip school by suspending them from school doesn't make much sense. Many students view this type of disciplinary action as a reward, not a punishment. Because out-of-school suspension is often ineffective in reducing student skipping or improving students' behavior at school, educators have begun to look for more effective and appropriate ways of dealing with such problems. Alcena Boozer, coordinator of student discipline programs for the Portland Public Schools, expresses the view of many educators when she says, "Our primary responsibility is to educate children and it is difficult to do that if they are out of school!"

Educators cannot afford to focus their attention solely on the best students. The interrelationship among unacceptable student behavior, inadequate or inappropriate disciplinary measures, and student dropout rates is no longer being questioned. There is considerable agreement both in the research literature and among educators interviewed in the preparation of this Bulletin concerning the necessity of keeping at-risk students at school and the means to achieve this goal. Authors of the report *Barriers to Excellence: Our Children at Risk* warn that "if proposed academic reforms are carried out without adding programs to help marginal students, the national dropout rate will rise."

This Bulletin reports on current research that has examined the problem of keeping at-risk students at school and describes several programs that offer alternatives to out-of-school suspension. In keeping with this purpose, *at-risk students* are defined as those who have behavioral or attendance problems. As

Billie James, principal of Lincoln Junior High School in Cottage Grove (Oregon) put it, these alternative programs, which effectively suspend and discipline students at school, are "a piece in the puzzle in dealing with the at-risk students."

Chapter 1 briefly describes three inschool suspension programs. The essential characteristics of such programs that are designed to address the needs of at-risk students are discussed in chapter 2. Components of effective inschool suspension programs, including referral, student interviews, the role of counselors in the process, and followup, are covered in chapter 3. Finally, chapter 4 examines the conceptual framework used in implementing inschool programs that are alternatives to out-of-school suspension.

Survey of Three Inschool Suspension Programs

One of the most widely implemented models for inschool suspension programs is Positive Alternative to Student Suspensions (PASS), developed in St. Petersburg, Florida, between 1972 and 1974. PASS is a nationally validated project that provides a sequence of intervention strategies other than out-of-school suspension to deal with students' behavioral problems. Some of the strategies involve isolating students from regular classes for varying periods of time, providing preventive counseling, and contacting students' parents. PASS has been operating in the Portland Public Schools since 1980-81. The Salem-Keizer School District now has PASS rooms at all its middle schools.

Other significant alternatives to out-of-school suspension have been developed over the past decade, including alternative learning centers, study halls, Saturday School, and afterschool detention. All these programs make it possible for students to be disciplined within the school environment.

Alternative Learning Centers (ALC) such as the one established at the James Madison Memorial High School in Wisconsin are low-cost disciplinary alternatives to out-of-school suspension, as John Pare reports.

Study centers or study halls have been established at many schools to serve a similar purpose. At Aloha High School in the Beaverton School District, a study hall period is an integral part of the daily schedule of all students. Some study centers focus primarily on academic weaknesses, whereas others are meant to be punitive.

Designing a positive alternative program to replace ineffective out-of-school suspension strategies has clearly become a high priority in many school districts. Long a fixture at the high school level, inschool suspension programs are now also being installed in middle schools as school districts see the need to begin these intervention procedures as early as possible to keep potential dropouts in school.

To demonstrate the variety of inschool suspension programs, this chapter briefly describes programs operating in a high school and junior high

school in Cottage Grove, a middle school in Salem, and a high school in Portland.

Cottage Grove High School and Lincoln Junior High School

Jerry Couch, director of secondary programs in the South Lane School District, emphasizes that South Lane has adopted a secondary schools approach to the problem of attempting to keep at-risk students at school. To ensure a coordinated plan of action, the administrators of the Cottage Grove High School and Lincoln Junior High School meet on a regular basis under the chairmanship of Couch. This team has designed a program that encompasses the following prevention/intervention strategies:

- Time-Out, in which students talk with an administrator or counselor about problems and work through alternative responses to problem situations
- Saturday School, which requires the student to spend four-and-a-half hours at school on a Saturday morning under strictly controlled conditions
- Inhouse Suspension, all-day programs held in a carefully and strictly controlled environment and supervised by a teacher's aide
- Afterschool Detentions, 35-minute detentions that are assigned and controlled directly by the teachers and administrators and can occur on a daily basis.

Parents, students, and faculty are kept well informed about the procedures and philosophy underlying the program, and there is strong evidence that this coordination in designing and implementing the program contributes to its success.

All the administrators spend considerable time counseling the students and helping them to face the reality that the actions taken by the school are a consequence of decisions that the students have made. The emphasis is not on punishment but on helping students learn how to make sensible and appropriate decisions in the future. Very close contact is maintained with the parents. Conferences are held with the students' parents, and the district has strong support from parent groups who see the district's inhouse suspension program as a rational alternative to out-of-school suspensions.

Judd Van Gorder, assistant principal at Cottage Grove High School, stresses that the students are expected to be productively occupied during inhouse suspension. They are expected to sign an agreement to fulfill the

behavioral requirements of the program and to express their intention to try to make changes in their lifestyles.

Judson Middle School

At Judson Middle School in the Salem-Keizer Public Schools, the inschool Positive Alternative to School Suspension (PASS) program is used whenever possible as an alternative to out-of-school suspension. Judson's PASS program consists of a supervised all-day study session; students are prohibited from attending all social and recreational activities during their suspension.

The underlying philosophy of the program is that preventative measures are usually better than corrective measures in terms of discipline. When corrective measures are called for, the school tries to make them learning experiences for the student as well as a consequence for misbehavior. As Sandy McDow, assistant principal, said, "We want it to be a learning situation, but still aversive enough so that the student says, 'I don't want to come back; therefore, I will make better choices'." An important feature of the program is the involvement of all the teachers, who actively orient the students to the expectations of the school at the beginning of each semester.

Students are referred to the PASS room if they have committed suspendable offenses that are not severe enough to warrant out-of-school suspension. Assignment to PASS room usually follows a series of disciplinary steps that include withdrawal of certain privileges, schoolwork assignments, essay assignments (for inappropriate, impulsive classroom behavior), and noon-hour detention (for minor infractions).

Referrals come from teachers, who complete referral forms and send them to McDow. (A copy of this referral form is included in Appendix A.) She proceeds to counsel the students and listen to their side of the problem, trying to help them understand how their behavior created the problem and what they might have done to prevent the problem. Parents are notified by telephone if the offense is considered serious; otherwise a copy of the referral form is sent home.

Clear procedures are followed by the school to ensure that assignments are provided for the students by the relevant teachers. The PASS room has a library of resource material and generic work packets for use by students who complete their assignments before the end of the day. Teachers grade completed assignments, enabling students to keep up with their regular classwork.

Students are normally assigned to the PASS room for one day, where they work in study carrels with supervision and help available should they need it. Written PASS room regulations, strictly enforced, are handed to each student. A PASS room log is kept to enable the staff to review and evaluate the effectiveness of the program.

Judson Middle School has evolved a planned sequential approach that endeavors to prevent inappropriate student behavior from developing into a pattern of conduct that could lead to their out-of-school suspension. This middle school program encourages students to make appropriate choices at an early age, thus helping them to formulate positive attitudes toward their schoolwork.

Grant High School

Over the past six years Grant High School has developed an effective alternative to out-of-school suspension. The main emphasis of the Grant High School PASS program has been preventative action and conflict resolution.

The program at Grant includes participation by four components: students, staff, parents, and members of the community.

Students

The main thrust of the student component is to prevent problems and/or to intervene so as to help the student return to the regular classroom as soon as possible. The PASS staff conduct an orientation program for all their freshmen during their social studies classes to help the new students settle into high school life. Students referred to the PASS room for time-out or inschool suspension are counseled on behavior modification, study skills, how to develop life plans, and how to communicate with teachers and parents. Personnel also help the student to develop problem-solving techniques through support group activities.

Accurate records are kept of all referrals and monthly and yearly evaluations are done. Significant questions about the PASS program's effectiveness are discussed at these evaluation meetings, thereby helping them to adapt and modify their program to changing needs.

Staff

The PASS room coordinator, Jimmie Kirkpatrick, serves as a mediator between the staff and the students. He spends time holding teacher conferences, acting as a liaison between teachers and parents, and doing classroom visitations at the request of the teachers. The PASS staff also conduct inservice training for the teachers and run workshops for the teachers about their PASS program. The PASS coordinator works hard to see that the teaching staff are well informed about referrals to the PASS room.

Parents and the Community

Parent conferences are held regularly to keep parents informed of their child's situation and to help them deal with their child in a supportive way. Referral forms are also immediately sent to parents, and telephone contact is made as soon as possible. The PASS staff also conduct parenting classes.

The PASS program makes every effort to utilize the resources of the community through such means as calling in outside consultants to be guest speakers and having the PASS staff attend meetings and courses offered outside of the school appropriate to the program.

These brief descriptions of the programs in use at Cottage Grove, Salem, and Portland demonstrate how schools have devised disciplinary procedures that address the specific needs of at-risk students, helping them to get back on track and complete their schooling.

Addressing the Needs of At-Risk Students

When administrators and educators began searching for viable alternatives to suspending students from school, they soon realized that these programs would have to be more than mere punitive disciplinary alternatives. Some students were displaying behavioral characteristics and attendance problems that clearly placed their future in school at risk. By merely suspending these students, school administrators were avoiding the students' real problems and probably increasing the likelihood that they would drop out of school. To address this issue, programs had to be designed that met the needs of the at-risk students.

Today's students, not unlike their parents, are faced with increasingly difficult circumstances in which to live. Our rapidly changing society puts a lot of pressure on young people to achieve in a highly competitive environment. Positive alternatives to out-of-school suspension provide a range of creative and flexible options that encourage, rather than discourage, success. These alternatives to traditional methods of school discipline, when well-planned, can provide a framework within a school that will effectively address the problems of students who are potential dropouts. Such programs can also assist students who have temporarily gone "off the track" to get back into the regular classroom.

This chapter examines the essential characteristics of inschool suspension programs that are designed to address the needs of at-risk students.

Academic Assistance

Students who are candidates for suspension are more likely than other students to have poor attitudes toward academic coursework. To change these attitudes, programs must address such issues as students' learning handicaps, inadequate preparation in the lower grades, inability to use appropriate resource materials, and lack of basic skills. Helping students to stay on task and understand the need for regular school attendance so that they may do well

in their courses is an essential feature of programs aimed at improving at-risk students' academic skills.

Many at-risk students display inadequate study skills and inappropriate behavior in the regular classroom. These students' lifestyles are frequently characterized by inappropriate behavior, suspensions, failing grades, and a generally negative direction. Therefore, alternatives to out-of-school suspension should incorporate several different components ranging from one-to-one counseling on a daily basis to sequential semester-long courses that are offered to students in tandem with their current academic curriculum. These programs should be flexible and tailored to the needs of the individual. The many skills units used in Grant High School's PASS room, some of which are offered to all the freshmen at their school, demonstrate one approach to the problem of helping students effect behavioral changes. The critical point is that programs that deal successfully with suspendable students must provide students with opportunities to experience success instead of failure at school.

Students assigned to inhouse suspension classes should be provided with a closely monitored environment in which they can work on assignments given by their regular teachers. An organized structure provides the student with a framework within which to work. If the suspension room teacher is experienced at helping students with negative work attitudes, his or her guidance is extremely important in helping the students to make incremental changes in attitudes and work habits that lead to academic success. After all, the purpose of the program is to return the student to the regular classroom curriculum as soon as possible. Doing so without helping the student to overcome poor study and behavioral habits overlooks a primary reason for such alternative school programs, namely, to help students stay at school and ultimately complete their schooling.

The majority of inschool suspension programs focus on eighth- and ninth-grade students, many of whom are unable to meet relatively advanced academic requirements that reflect the increasing demands of our high technology age. Suspending these students from school means that they fall even further behind in their schoolwork and, in turn, become even more discouraged and frustrated. Assigning these students to an inhouse suspension room or alternative learning center provides them with the opportunity to make up missed work in a quiet, supportive environment.

Although everyone seems to agree that inschool suspension programs should help students succeed academically, apparently few programs actually do so. Paula Short and George Noblit (1985) report that nine of the ten so-called "good" inschool suspension programs that they studied were essentially punitive and had only a weak academic component. The one exception incorporated, among other important features, activities such as "complete classwork as a 'success' experience, and develop appropriate means to deal with the school environment."

Developing a Sense of Responsibility

Programs that attempt to break the negative cycle at-risk students are caught in require them to accept responsibility for their actions and to take steps to start the process of resolving their problems. As Jimmie Kirkpatrick, PASS coordinator at Portland's Grant High School, put it, "The main goal is to get the student to take positive steps to approach the problem." In most programs, each student draws up a plan or contract that identifies the problems as both the student and the teacher see them. In the contract the student also suggests steps toward solving these problems and getting back on task. The teacher then reviews the contract and it is signed by both the teacher and the student. A typical contract might state, "I will be on task. I will be in class on time. I will not be tardy. I will not talk to _____." Teachers and students are encouraged to discuss the contract and to modify it so that both parties understand the agreement and the consequences of failing to satisfy the terms of the contract.

At Lincoln Junior High in Cottage Grove the students are told what the school's expectations are and what the consequences of inappropriate behavior will be. The student must then decide what direction to take. Students' choices are sometimes written and signed by the students so they see that the agreement is not merely a punishment but a statement of intent to make meaningful changes.

As Sandy McDow, assistant principal of Judson Middle School (Salem-Keizer Public Schools), says, "Assignment to the PASS room is the consequence of a choice made by the student." Now it is necessary, perhaps for the first time for some students, to enter into an agreement with the school or perhaps with their parents that outlines a plan of action they have designed (usually with guidance and counseling from teachers) that will help them to get back into the regular classroom.

Flexible Assignments

Educators involved in inschool suspension programs agree that the programs should allow for flexibility as to the length of a student's assignment to an alternative learning class. Usually students are assigned from a minimum of one class period to a maximum of ten consecutive school days. The average assignment of a middle school student is one day, whereas the optimum duration for high school students is from one to three days. Although flexibility is clearly called for, it is also essential that the application of the program be fair to all the students.

A common feature of the programs investigated at Cottage Grove, Salem, and Portland is that they are developmental programs that evolved to meet the specific needs of the schools concerned. The personnel were

determined to design flexible programs that addressed the concerns of their specific environments.

Clear Expectations

Another characteristic of successful programs is that students have a clear understanding of both behavior expected of them while suspended and the consequences of failing to attend inhouse suspension. At Cottage Grove behavioral rules are stated in the student handbook, while at Judson Middle School and Grant High School a separate rulebook has been designed to ensure the smooth running of their PASS rooms. Grant High School's In-School Suspension Rules must be signed by each student admitted. (A copy of these rules is included in Appendix B.)

A related requirement is that staff clearly communicate to students what assignments must be completed while they are in the inhouse suspension room. In most cases students are required to pick up classwork assignments from their teachers prior to commencing the inhouse suspension. Successful programs ensure that the staff member responsible can give adequate tutorial assistance and assist students with study skills problems. Realistically set assignments that are within the students' ability, when assisted by the teachers, can do much to help the students become more confident about their academic ability.

Many successful programs also ask students to complete a questionnaire. Rich Brunaugh, assistant principal at Cottage Grove's Lincoln Junior High School, says, "We ask the students to fill out a questionnaire which includes such questions as Why are you here? What did you do to get in here? How do you feel about being here?" These questionnaires can be most useful to counselors and PASS room coordinators when they interview the students and help them with their academic and behavioral problems.

Clear and consistent expectations derive from an overall strategy that involves all school personnel and also students' parents in the inschool suspension program. Faculty and school administrators not only are involved in the day-to-day operation of the program but, more importantly, understand and accept the underlying philosophy of the program. In addition, the program does everything possible to involve the parents in the process so that the full resources of the home and the school can be utilized in helping these at-risk students.

Focus on the At-Risk Student

Successful programs include therapeutic components that provide support for the at-risk students involved. As Portland's Jimmie Kirkpatrick stated, "We aim at taking positive steps to help the student through counseling

services, helping the student identify the causes of problems, and giving them suggestions as to how to work out their problems."

Grant High School has compiled a number of study packets on such topics as math and on such behaviors as vandalism, fighting, attendance, and understanding contracts. The school also conducts orientation programs for freshmen, thereby helping all students develop sound school survival skills. These and other programs incorporate problem-solving, study, and coping skills and help students develop appropriate behavioral practices.

Char Gray-Shoffner (1986) points out some essential features of a therapeutic program designed to keep at-risk students in school. The teacher grades the students in the Student Study Center twice a day based on behavior and academic success. The students also grade themselves and explain why they think they deserve the grades. With the aim of helping students take responsibility for their own actions, study center staff focus not only on academics but on behavior and habits that distract students from learning.

It is important to remember that students identified for placement in an inhouse suspension program have very individual needs and will not easily change existing behavioral and learning habits. For this reason, teachers who deal directly with these students develop a relationship with them that is conducive to frank expression of feelings and participation in problem-solving that teaches students how to make appropriate choices.

Components of Inschool Suspension Programs

Effective inschool suspension programs are carefully planned and administered. A number of characteristics are usually present in successful programs, including a clearly defined referral process, interviews with students, followup procedures, and close cooperation with counselors. These and other features of effective inschool suspension programs are illustrated by additional references to the programs in the Cottage Grove, Salem-Keizer, and Portland school districts described in chapter 1.

The Referral Process

In their study of inschool suspension programs, Paula Short and George Noblit (1985) found that having a clearly defined referral process was one characteristic that distinguished successful programs from unsuccessful ones. The one successful program they studied had clearly defined the referral process so that students were referred to the inschool suspension class only "when the staff believed that it would help him or her." In this successful program, say Short and Noblit, "referral as well as counseling was based on some diagnosis, albeit limited, of the student's problem and the determination of appropriate placement and treatment after placement."

Larry McMurray, assistant to the superintendent for auxilliary services in the Salem-Keizer Public Schools, points out that the most important criterion for referral is that the referring adult "believes that the student is having difficulty that requires some kind of assistance." It is easier to recognize that a student has a problem when staff, students, and parents agree on a list of unacceptable behavior and know the consequences of engaging in such behavior. Typical reasons for referral of students include truancy, skipping school, excessive tardiness, showing disrespect for teachers, defiance, cheating, fighting, vandalism, and theft.

Identifying which students will benefit from a constructive alternative to out-of-school suspension, however, is not a simple matter. One of the

weaknesses observed in programs studied by Short and Noblit was that these schools spent little time determining the appropriateness of the placement of students in inschool suspension programs. Unless the referral process is handled well, long-term benefits to students who could be helped by the programs are reduced.

Rolland R. James, Jr. (1983) designed a system for his school in which each infraction was assigned so many points depending on the severity of the act. He used a scale of punishment that went from a warning all the way up to one hundred points. Ten points, for example, earned a student one day in the Study Center.

At Cottage Grove's Lincoln Junior High School rules are put in rank order, and the consequences for violating specific rules range from time-out, afterschool detention, Saturday School, inschool suspension, to out-of-school suspension.

Once clear policies are devised at the building level, the school's principal and other administrators are in a much better position to make sound judgments about the most appropriate response when a referral occurs. Depending on the style of the principal or the size of the school, referrals may be processed by a team of administrators or other personnel who are trained to deal with such referrals. Aside from needing to be fully informed about the reasons for the student's referral, the persons making the decision will always need to ask themselves, "Will the student benefit from the program?" It is also important to determine whether the student is displaying a pattern of misbehavior or whether the problem is an isolated incident.

One of the indicators of the success and acceptance of the PASS program at Grant High School is that there are quite a few self-referrals. Students' willingness to come forward of their own accord suggests that the school has created an positive attitude toward the program. Students feel sufficiently comfortable with the program to use it when they realize they have a need.

Most schools have designed simple procedures that are used to begin the process of inhouse suspension. Faculty are kept up-to-date on these procedures at inservice meetings, and every effort is made to ensure uniform and consistent application of the school's policy. (A copy of a typical referral form, used by Salem-Keizer's Judson Middle School, is provided in Appendix A.) Sent to the parent, the mentor, the office, the teacher, and the counselor, the form briefly describes the reasons for referral and action taken prior to referral. Similar forms are used in the PASS program in the Portland Public Schools. The many different people within the school community who are involved with the student must be notified as soon as possible.

Whatever system is used, it is essential that all persons involved understand what procedures to follow. Successful programs also have effective systems for keeping track of the number of referrals, the reasons for referrals, and the pattern of referrals to assist in in the evaluation of these programs.

Student Interviews

Many displays of inappropriate behavior that lead to students being referred to an inschool suspension room are merely symptoms of other problems. Some students who violate school norms may indirectly be pleading for help. Placed under the supervision of an empathetic teacher, students have the opportunity to receive counseling and be listened to. Creating an atmosphere in the inhouse suspension room that is conducive to students feeling willing and confident to discuss their problems is very important.

Most effective suspension room programs allow for either an administrator or the coordinator of the program to spend time with the student discussing the school's behavioral expectations. Many also use this time to find out what the student feels about his or her problem and, as Sandy McDow put it, "to ask the student what the consequences should be for their actions." The intent is to move the focus of the discussion away from the notion that students are being punished to an awareness that what is happening is a consequence of decisions that they have made. The goal is to encourage students to make appropriate and acceptable decisions in the future. During this time, the length of time the student will be required to spend in the program is determined and statements of intent and agreement to change existing lifestyles are accepted by the student. Students are also expected to abide by the rules and regulations governing the program and to sign an agreement to this effect.

M. Hayes Mizell (1977) suggests that staff should give students the opportunity to present their side of the story and explain to students why the inschool suspension has been recommended for them. Although this procedure is not legally required, it demonstrates fairness and respect while affording some legal protection for the school district and the school personnel.

After the student has been interviewed, contact is made with the parents. This could be by telephone, by mailing a copy of the referral form to the parent, or by arranging for a parent conference at the school. Although the form of the contact depends on the circumstances, every effort is made to establish and maintain close communication with the parents. Educators involved in these programs report that the vast majority of parents favor some sort of alternative to out-of-school suspension. Many parents are in fact relieved that their children are remaining at school in a positive, supportive program.

Followup

After the student leaves the inhouse suspension program and returns to the regular classroom, some sort of followup process should be implemented.

Since the goal of the program was to help the student get back on track and make significant behavioral changes, it is important to determine whether this was accomplished. Close liaison among the administrators, the staff involved with the inhouse suspension room, and the students' teachers is necessary. Followup counseling sessions with the students' teachers enables the school to track the progress (or lack of progress) that the student is making. Those students who demonstrated at-risk tendencies will need long-term support if they are to continue their school careers without further interruptions.

The Role of Counselors

Although most programs do not use counselors as coordinators of inhouse suspension programs, there is clear evidence of a close working relationship between the staff supervising such classrooms and the counseling staff. Approaches to counseling students placed in inhouse suspension programs differ depending in part on the circumstances of the school and the personnel involved. At Judson Middle School much of the counseling is done by Assistant Principal Sandy McDow, while at Cottage Grove High School and Lincoln Junior High the administrators share the counseling responsibilities. At Grant High School Jimmie Kirkpatrick does most of the counseling of PASS room students.

During counseling sessions attempts are made to find out what the problem is, establish priorities in solving the problem, and focus on appropriate behavioral changes. Counselors also try to help the student deal with emotions such as anger and resentment, understand and change negative attitudes toward authority or their family, and enhance their sense of self-esteem. Counselors strive to be fair and nonjudgmental with the student and to play the role of facilitator while also encouraging the adoption of acceptable standards and values by the student.

In sum, the smooth functioning of the whole referral and interview process is crucial to the success of alternative programs. Devising well-organized procedures for referral, spending time interviewing the students and holding parent conferences, and implementing adequate followup and evaluation will help schools develop successful inschool alternative programs.

Implementation

The long-term success of school programs that address the problem of what to do with at-risk students other than suspending them from school depends to a large extent on the conceptual framework used in implementing such a program. To help students modify their behavioral and attendance patterns, school districts have the legal authority to deny students' privileges and to take away their time. These limited options need to be utilized in tandem with the school's responsibility to provide the best possible education for all their students, not just high achievers.

Billie James, principal of Cottage Grove's Lincoln Junior High School, expresses the primary objective of programs that are viable alternatives to out-of-school suspensions: "The ultimate objective is to have students learn to make good and appropriate decisions for the circumstances they are in."

Laying the Foundation

Writing in the *NASSP Bulletin*, Roy Mendez and Stanley G. Sanders (1981) warn against indiscriminate use of inhouse suspension programs. They caution that inschool suspension programs "serving as administrative dumping grounds were destined for failure." Yet, when properly conducted, inschool suspension programs have the potential to reduce many of the behavioral and educational problems in secondary schools, say Mendez and Sanders. They found that these alternative programs can also help to identify students with deficient academic skills or severe emotional or behavioral problems.

According to M. Hayes Mizell (1977), "It is extremely important for an in-school suspension program to rest on a solid philosophical foundation from the outset. If this does not happen, the good intentions which motivated the creation of the program are likely to be eroded as the program is planned and becomes operational."

Alcena Boozer, coordinator of student discipline programs for the Portland Public Schools, points out that the place to begin is "to monitor the climate of the school or schools in the district to see what kinds of problems

they are manifesting." Recent research into alternative programs aimed at keeping at-risk students in school confirms that, to be successful, programs must be based on the needs of individual schools. As Boozer says, "schools and the neighborhood serviced have their own unique personalities, hence the PASS room begins to move to meet those specific needs."

Ensuring that many different groups and individuals have an opportunity to participate in this process will help to identify the problem areas and the needs of the school and assist in establishing concerns and priorities. In any effort to change the academic and behavioral attitudes of at-risk students, the unqualified support of the school principal and other administrators is essential. Not only must the principal support the philosophy behind such programs, he or she must also be a source of encouragement and ideas. The school principal has access to district administrators who can authorize changes in the school's curriculum or staffing, changes that may well be necessary to address the students' problems. Moreover, hiring additional competent faculty and aides may be necessary to substantially improve these at-risk students' academic and school survival skills.

Changes needed to implement an overall strategy to address this problem will need the support of other significant groups of people as well. As staff, students, counselors, parents, and members of the community are involved in this exploratory phase, a sense of ownership will grow from their participation in initial discussions. Although this process takes time, it will be well spent and will demonstrate the clear intentions of the program's designers to meet the needs of the students and the school.

The next step is to form a planning committee representing administrators, staff, counselors, and parents who are committed to seeking workable solutions to the problems identified in the initial phase. It may well be useful for some of the members of the committee to visit other schools that already have such programs to see how they work. Current research about such programs should also be studied.

Short and Noblit (1985) suggest some key questions that should be asked:

- Does the school have a total school discipline program?
- What are the teachers' perceptions and philosophies?
- Is the school attempting to identify the reasons for rule violations and misbehavior?
- What are the positive reinforcers in the discipline program?
- What do school personnel want inschool suspension or some positive alternative to accomplish?

Steps in Planning an Alternative Program

Jimmie Kirkpatrick spoke of the importance of "selling" the program to

the faculty. "The program has to be sold to the whole staff," who must know how they fit in and what the goals of the program are. Unless the program has the full support of the staff, who may well have to sacrifice some time to make it work, it has little chance of success. The staff's commitment will give students the impression that teachers and administrators mean business and are serious about helping students find answers to their problems. It does not necessarily follow that all staff will feel comfortable with changes that are needed to facilitate the smooth operation of the program, but if the staff had a clear role in the design of the program, there is a greater chance they will work with the new system.

All the people interviewed stressed the importance of carefully selecting the staff who will be directly involved in the day-to-day operation of the inhouse suspension rooms. The quality of the persons selected, their temperament, and their ability to work with students who often have negative attitudes toward schoolwork are absolutely vital to the success of the program. The staff must be able to maintain firm control of the students while creating an atmosphere in which students can freely share and express their problems.

Prospective staff members perhaps should be chosen to to serve on the planning committee responsible for implementing the program. This committee will also need to clarify exactly how the staffing of the program is going to be financed.

To familiarize all the staff and administrators with the program's philosophy and procedures, the committee can organize inservice workshops. For example, the referral process needs to be clearly understood by all teachers so that they only refer students to the program when they know it can be beneficial to the student and not just to rid themselves of a problem that they have in the classroom.

Special activities should be planned to orient students and their parents to ensure that they understand exactly what the program is and what it hopes to achieve. This could involve a series of presentations at PTA meetings for parents and students or the use of class time. At Grant High School, the PASS coordinators conduct orientation programs for the students during social studies.

The planning committee should also design effective measures to provide ongoing evaluation of the program and to allow for feedback that can be used to adapt and modify the program as circumstances change or new problems arise.

Documents and forms should be designed for easy use by staff. These include referral forms, control forms, forms to facilitate collection of student assignments, and letters or information fliers that can be used to communicate with parents. In addition, a team of experienced people should develop study skills packets that can be used to help the students overcome behavioral or attendance problems and questionnaires to solicit information from students entering the program.

Finally, adequate preparation needs to be made to select a suitable venue

for the class and to provide desks, tables, and other resource material. Whether study carrels are necessary may also need to be considered. The inclusion of suitable library reading and reference materials is also recommended.

The time required to initiate, design, and implement such a program could be as long as a full year. However, if preliminary planning begins before spring, allowing much of the preparation to be carried out during summer, then a shorter period would suffice. If a school district is planning to implement such a program districtwide, it may be wise to begin with a pilot school before expanding to all the schools.

Conclusion

By integrating practical experience of schools with current research, this Bulletin has attempted to present information about inschool suspension programs that address the needs of at-risk students. According to a growing number of educators, positive alternatives to traditional out-of-school suspensions are no longer an option but a necessity. Students who are suspended from school get behind in their work, fail their classes, and frequently get caught up in a negative cycle that leads to their dropping out of school.

Each of the schools visited in preparation for this Bulletin displayed evidence of program designs that are sensitive to the unique needs of the communities they serve. The administrators interviewed showed that they had a clear understanding of the expectations and underlying philosophies inherent in their particular programs. Although styles may differ, the common thread evident in all the interviews is that the purpose of inschool suspension programs is to help the student get back into the regular classroom as soon as possible. Purely punitive programs that do not involve some sort of therapeutic component are deficient. The options provided by positive alternative programs enable teachers, counselors, and administrators to assist students who are caught up in a frustratingly negative cycle to begin again in a more supportive environment.

There is no need to redesign the wheel. Considerable experience and expertise have been demonstrated by schools such as those visited in Cottage Grove, Salem, and Portland. Their programs, which are helping many students regain their self-esteem and remain in school, can serve as models for other districts.

Appendices

- A. Judson Middle School Disciplinary Referral Form
- B. Grant High School In-School Suspension Rules

JUDSON MIDDLE SCHOOL
4512 Jones Rd., SE
Salem, Oregon 97302

DISCIPLINARY REFERRAL

DATE _____

NOTICE TO PARENTS

1. The purpose of this report is to inform you of a disciplinary referral made concerning your child.
2. You are urged to discuss this matter with him/her.
3. If you have any questions, please call 399-3201.

Student's Name _____ Grade _____

Date of Incident _____ Period _____ Time _____ Teacher _____

REASONS FOR REFERRAL	ACTION TAKEN PRIOR TO REFERRAL	ACTION TAKEN
☐ Excessive tardiness ☐ Destruction to school property ☐ Lack of class materials ☐ Disobedience ☐ Rude, discourteous ☐ Excessive talking ☐ Inappropriate language ☐ Fighting ☐ _____	☐ Conference with student ☐ Changed student's seat ☐ Detained student after class ☐ Consulted counselor ☐ Contacted parent ☐ Held conference with parent ☐ Previous referral	☐ Counseling ☐ Parent-Teacher conference ☐ In-school suspension ☐ Time-out room ☐ Contact parent ☐ Noon detention ☐ Case referred to _____ _____

DISTRIBUTION:
 white — Parent copy
 green — Mentor copy
 canary — Office copy
 pink — Teacher copy
 goldenrod — Counselor copy

GRANT HIGH SCHOOL
IN-SCHOOL SUSPENSION RULES

The following are the basic rules that are to be followed during your stay in the in-school suspension program.. Additional requirements may be added at any time by the in-school suspension staff. Your cooperation and understanding of these rules is important and expected. FAILURE TO FOLLOW THESE RULES MAY NECESSITATE YOUR BEING RETAINED IN THE IN-SCHOOL SUSPENSION ROOM FOR ADDITIONAL TIME.

1. You will be assigned a desk in the in-school suspension room.
2. There is to be NO TALKING without permission of the PASS room staff.
3. If this is your first time in the PASS room this year, you will be allowed a 5 minute break in the morning and afternoon. Breaks are to be taken individually and you will be notified of your time by the PASS room staff. Permission must be given by Staff to leave your assigned desk.
3. You are expected to STUDY during the time in the PASS room. Permission may be given by the PASS room staff to go between classes to get assignments from teachers.
4. You will be given a 30 minute lunch break to go to the cafeteria. Tardiness in returning to the PASS room from the lunch break will be noted by staff, and must be made up after school.
5. You will be required to fill out, in an honest and helpful manner, certain information packets that will assist staff members and counselors in helping you avoid being suspended again. Failure to cooperate and provide legitimate information in the in-school suspension room will necessitate your being retained for additional time.
6. If you are a part-time student, you will be expected to remain in the PASS room for the entire school day unless proof can be provided that you absolutely must be at your job during school hours. If this is the case, then you will make up the number of hours missed in the PASS room because of work until a full school day In- school suspension has been completed.

I have read the above rules and I understand them.

Student signature

References

- Bailey, Ralph E., and Kackley, John C. "Positive Alternatives to Student Suspensions: An Overview." St. Petersburg, Florida: Pupil Personnel Services Demonstration Project.
- Barriers to Excellence: Our Children at Risk.* Board of Inquiry Project. Boston: January 1985. 162 pages.
- Carnegie Forum on Education and the Economy. *A Nation Prepared: Teachers for the 21st Century: The Report of the Task Force on Teaching as a Profession.* New York: Carnegie Corporation, May 1986.
- Collins, Christopher G. "Helping Children with Behavioral Problems (Through In-School Suspension)." Paper presented at the annual meeting of the Council for Exceptional Children. Anaheim, California, April 1985. 12 pages. ED 258 352.
- Conrath, Jerry. "Snatching Victory from the Jaws of Learning Defeat: How One School Fought the Dropout Blitz." *Contemporary Education*, 56, 1, (Fall 1984), pp. 36-38. EJ 309 310.
- Corbett, Adele Hawley. "Is Your ISS Program Meeting Its Goals? Take a Closer Look." *NASSP Bulletin*, 65, 448 (November 1981), pp. 59-63. EJ 252 249.
- Edwards, Marvin E. "This Last-Ditch Plan Keeps Would Be Dropouts in School." *American School Board Journal*, 172, 8 (August 1985), p. 24. EJ 323 641.
- Gray-Shoffner, Char. "A Rescue Program for Potential Dropouts." *Middle School Notes*, 559 (November 1986), pp. 53-54.
- Harvey, Donald L., and Moosha, William G. "In-School Suspension: Does It Work?" *NASSP Bulletin*, 61, 405 (January 1977), pp. 14-17. EJ 158 810.

- Jackson, Frank H. "Dropout Prevention: Internal Suspension Room Disadvantaged Pupil Program Fund." 1983-84 Evaluation Report prepared for the Cleveland Public Schools, Ohio. August 1984, pp. 34-47. ED 248 315.
- James, Rolland R. "Sorry, Partner, But Your Suspension Is Here at School." *Principal*, 62, 5, (May 1983), pp. 42-43. EJ 283 830.
- Mendez, Roy. "School Suspension-Discipline without Failure." *NASSP Bulletin*, 61, 405 (January 1977), pp. 11-13. EJ 158 809.
- Mendez, Roy, and Sanders, Stanley G. "An Examination of In-School Suspension: Panacea or Pandora's Box?" *NASSP Bulletin*, 65, 441 (January 1981), pp. 65-69. EJ 238 675.
- Mizell, M. Hayes. *Designing a Positive In-School Suspension Program*. Jackson, Mississippi: American Friends Service Committee, October 1977. 12 pages. ED 144 251.
- Pare, John A. "Alternative Learning Centers: Another Option for Discipline Programs." *NASSP Bulletin*, 67, 462 (April 1983), pp. 61-67. EJ 279 489.
- Portland Public Schools. "Positive Alternatives to School Suspension (P.A.S.S.), 1985-86 Evaluation Report." August 1986. 15 pages.
- Short, Paula M., and Noblit, George W. "Missing the Mark in In-School Suspension: An Explanation and Proposal." *NASSP Bulletin*, 69, 484, (November 1985), pp. 112-116. EJ 326 633.
- Stessman, C.W. "In-School Suspension-Making It a Place to Grow." *NASSP Bulletin*, 69, 478 (February 1985), pp. 86-88. EJ 311 745.

Interviews

Rich Barber, Assistant Principal, North Salem High School, Salem-Keizer Public Schools, Salem, Oregon. Interview January 20, 1987.

Bud Bick, Assistant Principal, Lincoln Junior High School, South Lane School District, Cottage Grove, Oregon. Interview January 21, 1987.

Alcena Boozer, Coordinator of Student Discipline Programs, Portland Public Schools, Portland, Oregon. Interview January 16, 1987.

Rich Brunaugh, Assistant Principal, Lincoln Junior High School, South Lane School District, Cottage Grove, Oregon. Interview January 21, 1987.

Jerry Couch, Director, Secondary Programs, South Lane School District, Cottage Grove, Oregon. Interview January 21, 1987.

Billie James, Principal, Lincoln Junior High School, South Lane School District, Cottage Grove, Oregon. Interview January 21, 1987.

Jimmie Kirkpatrick, PASS Coordinator, Grant High School, Portland Public School District, Portland, Oregon. Interview January 16, 1987.

Sandy McDow, Assistant Principal, Judson Middle School, Salem-Keizer Public Schools, Salem, Oregon. Interview January 20, 1987.

Larry McMurray, Assistant to the Superintendent for Auxilliary Services, Salem-Keizer Public Schools, Salem, Oregon. Interview January 20, 1987.

Ed Otten, Principal, Cottage Grove High School, South Lane School District, Cottage Grove, Oregon. Interview January 20, 1987.

Judd van Gorder, Assistant Principal, Cottage Grove High School, South Lane School District, Cottage Grove, Oregon. Interview January 20, 1987.

Dan Venetz, Vice Principal, Aloha High School, Beaverton School District, Beaverton, Oregon. Interview January 16, 1987.

OSSC GOVERNING BOARD

Jean Fagnan, School Board Member, Reedsport SD 105
Charles Wiltse, Superintendent, Baker SD 5
Diane Davidson, School Board Member, Medford 549C
Robert Williams, Superintendent, Greater Albany Public SD 8J
Lee Christiansen, Washington ESD
Philip K. Piele, Executive Secretary, Oregon School Study Council
Paul Goldman, Associate Professor, Division of Educational Policy and
Management, University of Oregon
Milt Baum, Associate Superintendent of School Management Service
Division, State Department of Education
Betty Knight, School Board Member, Oregon School Boards Association

OSSC STAFF

Philip K. Piele, Executive Secretary
Stuart C. Smith, Editor
Julie DePauw, **Desmond Leatt**, Graduate Research Assistants
Linda Lumsden, Computer Layout
Carol M. Pritchett, Administrative Assistant